



A Perfect Murder

By BS Murthy

That was when he was the Station House Officer of the Saifabad Police Station; one morning, a young and beautiful woman, introducing herself as Neha, lodged a missing person complaint as Murali, her husband, failed to return home the previous night, and said that she feared something untoward could have happened with him. When he asked her whether she could think of anyone who could be inimical to him, she said sobbingly that he was his worst enemy, and after some persuasion, she narrated her tale - burdened by debts, ever since her husband wound up his automobile business, he became a cynic that is besides being an alcoholic; somehow, he convinced himself that a poor man's spouse was rich men's prey. So, suspecting her fidelity, he began alleging that she slept with all and sundry, and unable to bear the humiliation, she tried to commit suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills, but sadly for her, she couldn't die, but rattled by that, he became remorseful and started talking in terms of ending his own life; and it was his psychological imbalance and the hazards of drunken driving that came to plague her. When he asked for Murali's photograph, she handed him one.

But the next day, she came to inform him that her husband had returned only to remain more depressed than ever before, and even though she urged him to take it easy, he was still harping on his past; what's worse he says that he had no right to live. So, moved by her predicament, as Dhruva sounded sympathetic, she thanked him for his empathy, and said that she would

try to persuade him to consult a psychiatrist. Believing that that she deserved better and thinking that if only he met her as a miss, he wished her well and bade her good bye.

However, shortly thereafter, one evening in the police club, he heard a colleague say that only recently, at a desolate level crossing, not far off from Hyderabad, a man's body was retrieved from his car, accidentally crushed on the railway tracks, so much for the railway safety! Moreover, as the graphologist confirmed that the writing in the suicide note found in the victim's wallet matched his handwriting, and as the post-mortem report too indicated a drunken death, the case was closed as there was no reason to proceed further.

But as crime would have it, it readily occurred to him, what if Neha's missing person complaint, then was but a red herring, so he thought it fit to delve into her life and times, and as he gathered in the grapevine that Murali, suspecting her fidelity, was wont to ill-treat her, he could smell the rat. So, out of professional curiosity, he unofficially involved himself in the case, and upon closer scrutiny of the suicide note it became apparent to him that it was an odd tear-out from a foolscap paper and its tone and tenor suggested that possibly it could be a part of some story penned by the deceased. However, such a possibility amused him for muse or no muse, these days; all are at writing fiction, which, besides inundating the world of letters, made it difficult for the readers to separate the literary grain from the wordy chaff.

Whatever, were it not possible that Neha, having laid her hands on a manuscript containing that suicide thing, possibly returned by some magazine house, prepared the script for her husband's end with it; so he went round the publishing houses, in one of which, an assistant editor readily recalled the queer story with that suicide pitch, the manuscript of which was returned to the sender only recently. With the needle of suspicion so firmly tilted towards her murderous hand, he confronted her with that damned evidence.

Owning up her guilt, a teary-eyed Neha told him how it all started – since long, her husband began treating her merely as a sexual bowl, that too when he could not get hold of some whore or the other, and adding insult to injury, whenever he laid her, he made it a point to make that clear to her. How mean men can become to demean women, she lamented, and slighted thus, she seduced Mohan, his close friend, for sex as well as self-esteem. However, as her man got wind of their affair, he calibrated his responses cunningly; on one hand he started sponging on Mohan at the pain of breaking up with him, and on the other, he began scheming to ruin his marriage by estranging his wife from him. So, not wanting to be the cause of Mohan's marital ruin, she alerted him to Murali's designs; she even offered to end their affair; but afraid of Murali's potential for mischief, Mohan thought of silencing him by a *supari*, but fearing that the foolhardy of a third party could spell trouble for both of them, she chartered the course of that murder, as by then she had that fatal manuscript in her hand.

So, on that fateful day, she induced her man to drink to the hilt, and when he pissed out, for an alibi, she joined Mohan waiting at the Odeon, which they left as soon as the movie began. Thereby reaching home on the sly, she got her husband into her car for him to have fresh air at the city's outskirts, so she made it to the earmarked place with him in their car, while Mohan followed in his vehicle. There, steering her car onto the desolate railway tracks, and making Murali sit in the driving seat and sitting beside him to ensure that he stayed put, she awaited

the scheduled train to speed in, and upon citing it, got down from it to witness the good riddance of their bad rubbish. Soon, when it was all over for Murali, as Mohan drove in from a nearby hiding place, proud of that perfect murder, they drove back to the city to begin life afresh as man and his secret wife.

An excerpt from the eponymous chapter of the author's Googleable free ebook, Prey on the Prowl – A Crime Novel